number of urban co-operative banks are indulging in corrupt practices. However, certain instances of irregularities in the banking operations particularly in loans and advances portfolio of a few banks leading to deterioration in their financial position had been noticed. RBI has reported that based on the findings of inspection/inquiry, criminal proceedings have been instituted against few banks/their management for violation of provisions of Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (As Applicable to Co-operative Societies). These proceedings and inquiries are at various stages.

(d) The primary responsibility for preventing frauds rests with the management of each bank. RBI has, on its part, been advising banks from time to time about the major fraud prone areas and the safeguards necessary for their prevention. RBI has also been circulating to banks details of frauds of ingenious nature which comes to its notice so that individual banks could introduce necessary safeguards by adopting appropriate procedures and internal checks. RBI has issued instructions requiring the Urban cooperative banks to promptly report cases of frauds to RBI.

Expenditure on foreign tours

2447. SHRI CHO S. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of foreign tours undertaken by various Union Ministers/Senior Officials and MP's delegations to various countries during the last year;

(b) the number of countries visited by them;

(c) what are the achievements of these visits;

(d) the total expenses incurred on these visit in foreign exchange;

(e) in what manner these trips have been planned as essential; and

(f) what steps are being taken to minimise such unwanted expenses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) to (f) The information is

not centrally available and will have to be collected from all the Ministries/Departments. The information shall be laid on the Table of the House as soon as possible.

Abolition of BIFR

2448. SHRI CHO S. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering abolition of Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction;

(b) if so, by when it is actually to be effective; and

(c) what alternate schemes are being considered to monitor and give relief to sick industrial units across the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) to (c) A Bill, namely Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Repeal Bill, 2001 to repeal SICA was introduced in Lok Sabha on 30-8-2001, thereby proposing abolition of Board for Industrial & Financial Reconstruction (B.I.F.R.) and Appellate Authority for Industrial & Financial Reconstruction (AAIFR) mechanism. Simultaneously another Bill, namely, Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2001 has also been introduced *inter-alia* providing for setting up of a National Company Law Tribunal with powers currently exercised by (a) Company Law Board (CLB) (b) High Courts regarding winding up of Companies and amalgamation schemes; and

(c) BIFR/AAIFR under Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985. Both the Bills are currently receiving consideration of the Department related Parliamentary Standing Committees.